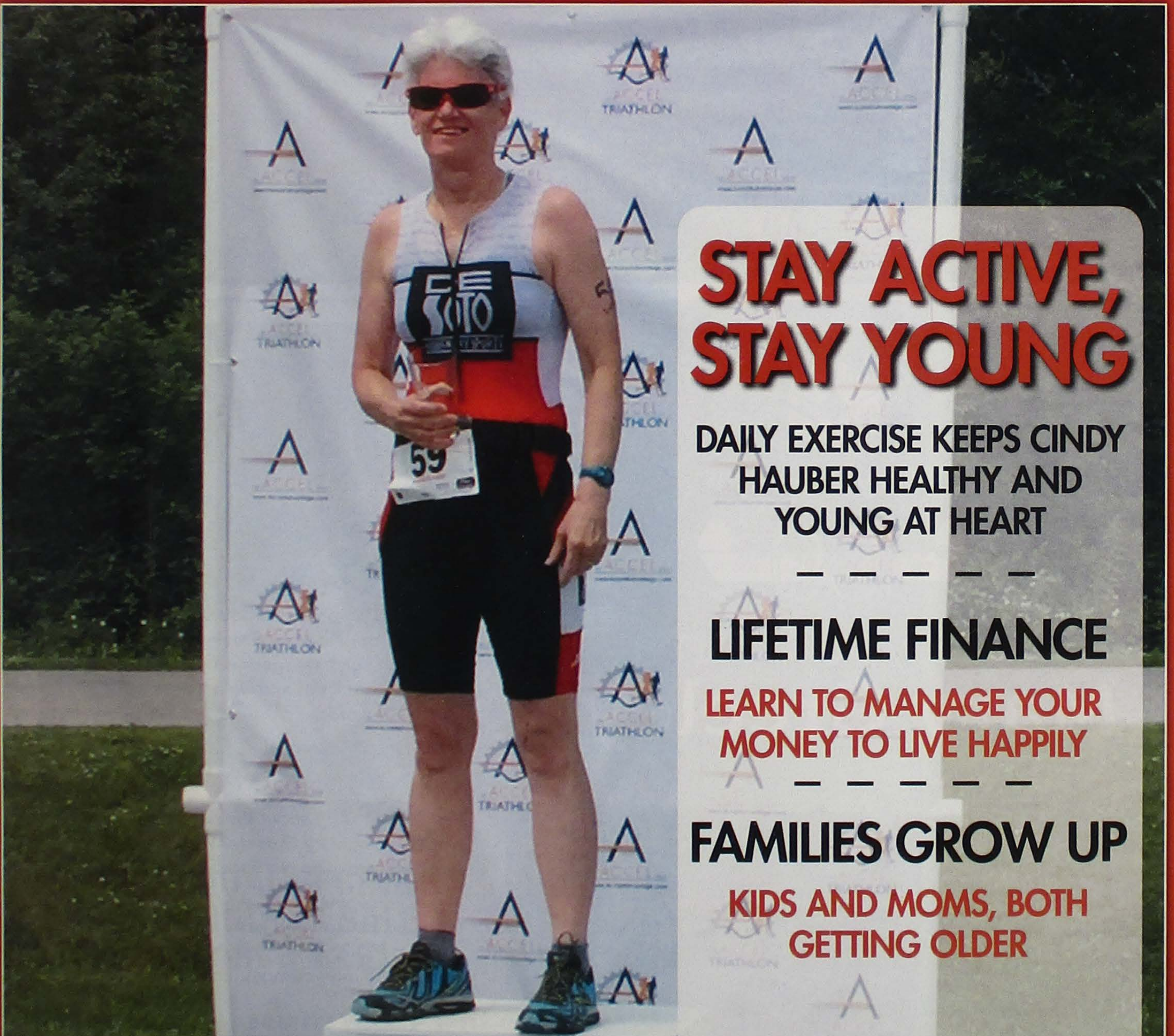


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EDITOR'S NOTE

I closed on a house in early February. The house was built in 1914. It is quite evident that the bathroom was added after the house was built and a hole was cut in the floor to access the basement from inside the house. The kitchen floor is dated, yet nice. All the original hardwood — floors, door frames and base boards — are in surprisingly beautiful condition. There are hints of history all over my new house. I catch myself thinking about paint colors and shelving, different ways to make this house my own.

This daydreaming helped me decide on the topic for this issue. Aging — as it relates to women, not housing. Looking back on the last few years I was amazed at how my life has changed due to the aging process. Girls grow up and become women. We all go on to pursue our own dreams. Some make a career of their hobbies and garden, design, build, create or discover — just to name a few — for the rest of their lives. Others push themselves to reach their physical goals and run triathlons.

There are so many things we learn as we grow and age. If you are a young woman I encourage you to sit down with a older woman, grandma or a woman who holds the place of that grandma figure in your life. Sit down and ask her about her childhood, about her adventures. What were her goals in life, what did she give up so her loved ones could have a better life? Cherish the stories and learn from them. Always take something away from those conversations and keep them in mind. You will be amazed at what 'grandma ladies' can teach you. As a 26-year-old I soak up the advice. Some of it may not pertain to me now, but in three to six years, who knows. Maybe I will be able dig through that treasure bank of knowledge.

Cindy Hauber takes first place in her age group at the Accel Triathlon in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Photo by Kecia Place-Fencl

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Kids and moms, both getting older

BY KAREN SCHWALLER
Contributing Writer

When I look at my mid-life self, I am reminded that I am not as young as I once was. The age spots that have popped up on my face and hands could allow me to compete handily with any sheep in the Speckle Face division at the county fair. The silver strands in my hair could double as Christmas tinsel and my neck mostly reminds family chefs that they should not forget to pick up the bird that will serve as the centerpiece for the Thanksgiving dinner table.

Every now and then Mother Nature steps in and does her job with great clarity. And just as all mothers, she means business because she is very busy.

I remember being a young mother and chasing after small children, wiping both ends, being splattered with pureed peas because of an unexpected baby sneeze; washing diapers, getting puked on and helping sick babies, even if it meant sleep came 20 minutes at a time.

Then came elementary school and we were busy with birthday parties, parent-teacher conferences and making valentines for school. Middle school came and we tried

to explain the 9/11 attacks, began our journey into the world of volleyball and wrestling and watched with pride as our daughter gave the class president speech at her eighth grade graduation.

When high school arrived we continued that sports journey, welcomed a brand new family member from Germany and wiped away tears with her last hug before she returned to her own family after a year with us. Those bittersweet tears returned as our sons accepted medals at the state wrestling tournament, and again as each of our children walked across the stage to accept scholarships, awards and to get their high school and college diplomas, and begin their adult lives as people of agriculture.

But as the children were growing older, apparently I was, too.

I'd been seeing the signs for some time, but it wasn't until recently in a local discount store that I realized what was truly happening to me while I was so busy all those years.

I hurried around gathering up a handful of things, when I stopped to determine if I had gotten everything I went there for. (Forgetfulness is so inefficient.) What I saw was color preserve shampoo, something to whoa hot flashes, something to sooth my aching hip joints and some vitamins

for women over 50. And suddenly the mystery was solved.

Good Lord. I was middle-aged. And it was like a rocket ship had just landed on Mars.

How did this happen to me? When did this happen to me? Did I really use all those things in my hands? I was in denial, and yet there were all those things—staring back at me.

Mocking me.

I was sure senility would come next. I remembered the prayer I had once read, "God, grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones I do like, and the eyesight to tell the difference."

Good heavens. I would need glasses to be on top of that one, too.

And so I was middle-aged. There are many who have missed the chance to get that far in life, so that makes me one of the lucky ones. I got to see our children grow up and have had the pleasure of watching my mother live in her 80s. I have been richly blessed to get this far.

John Lennon said, "Life is what happens while we are busy making other plans." And the proof of it was in my hands that day at the store.

I'll just be happy if they don't check my teeth at the Speckle Face Sheep Show. A lady never tells her age.

on-demand 22-minute doses of really fun stuff. We never had anything like that.

The flip of it is technology can turn into a full-time pursuit — playing with your friends, dealing with whatever social drama is going on. It can of course be a venue for kids to be really awful to each other and not leave it at school. And kids get sucked into watching not just 22 minutes of something; they watch all four seasons of "Grey's Anatomy" before they start their homework at 4 a.m., and that's really problematic.

So they have access to many more pleasures than we do, and pleasures we would have very much enjoyed, but it complicates their choices about how they're going to spend their time.

And it can absolutely get in the way of much less fun things like trigonometry.

Q: I have two elementary school girls. What do you wish parents like me were doing to lay a strong foundation for the coming teen years?

A: That's a great question. First of all, I wouldn't want them to be so anxious about adolescence. I think parents worry too much that it's going to be bad, and I don't think anxiety is a great position from which to parent. I think parenting kids in latency, which is sort of 6 to 11, is really a fun time to be a parent. Kids think you're great. They think you're funny. They like it when you play with them. They're really cute. They want to cuddle. It's actually a very, very gratifying time to be a parent.

The way I was trained to think about this is that our good relationship with our children is money in the bank and we write

our disciplinary checks against those accounts.

So, I think that parents of younger children should really take those years to build up happy, joyful times with their kids and to build up routines: having dinner together, having some goofy family game night on Friday, establishing habits around kids starting to take good care of themselves and demonstrating independence in small ways. Those are the years when parents can demonstrate that they enjoy their kids, that they like their kids, they have fun with their kids, they think their kids are funny, and that's a great position from which to enter adolescence, having demonstrated that home is a fun and warm place.

And a structured place. That's a time when you can make and enforce rules much more easily,

and that's a great time to lay down a groundwork. I think the safest adolescents are the ones who have parents they trust, parents who like them and parents who have their backs. And those are all things that can be laid down at 8, 9, 10 and 11.

I wish parents knew that the road to an ongoing relationship involves getting out of this position of "I'm the authority, and it's my job to chase my teenager into being civilized." You can actually play with your kids and have rules. "I'm still in charge, and as much as I have structure for you and as much as I have to hold the line, I do that while enjoying you and wanting to have fun with you and being curious about your perspective."

The most successful parents I see are open to the possibility that having a teenager is going to help them grow, too.



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TEEN Continued from page 7

the thinkers whom I reference throughout the book is Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter, who worked with younger children, children under the age of 5. She articulated various developmental lines along which children are always progressing simultaneously. Sometimes if a child is reading at age 5, parents can feel reassured that everything must be fine and neglect the fact that she still wrestles kids to the floor when they have a toy that she wants. She might be coming along great on the intellectual line but need a lot of help on the social development line.

So that kind of thinking is not new to my work, but taking that kind of thinking and applying it to adolescents the way I did is new. One of my jobs (as a clinical instructor in the Case Western Reserve University psychology department) is to help young clinicians learn how to be psychologists. My young, wonderful graduate students get very chaotic adolescent cases, so almost out of necessity we had to think in terms of "Well, what are the tasks of adolescence, and how is this particular client coming along in those tasks?"

And it helped my graduate students when we could say, "Okay, this is a girl who has friends. She's gotten that job done. This is a girl who can actually manage her academics and has plans for the future. But this is also a girl who is feeling out of control and cannot harness her emotions, so that's where we're going to focus our attention." It gave us a way to check some boxes and focus on the boxes where there still needed to be a lot more progress.

Q: I can see that that would be helpful to parents too — to be able to

make sense of what's going on with their teen.

A: The thing I am fascinated by about ado-

lescents is that often the parents' experience is they felt like they understood their daughter and then all of a sudden they feel like they don't understand their daughter. It's so jarring for your own child to suddenly seem inscrutable.

And because I get to be with so many teenagers, I have the benefit of getting to see the patterns.

They're not inscrutable; they just do things in a totally different way than they did before. They're aiming for things that adults have forgotten about, but if we see it from their perspective, they make a lot of sense. Even some of the really difficult or contradictory things that teenagers do start to make a lot more sense if we see what teenagers are aiming at.

Q: I just saw a headline the other day that read, "Parents, You're Doing It All Wrong." This doesn't seem to be a book that strikes that tone with parents. Was that intentional?

A: Yes. I think it's human nature, when things get difficult, to look for good guys and bad guys. And I think the reality is that being a parent is challenging, and I think that being a parent of a teenager can be especially challenging. It's very easy to default to a narrative of "Who's messing this

up?" Sometimes we're pointing our finger at the parent and sometimes we're pointing our finger at the teenager, and there's

probably some useful insight that can be gained in those frameworks. But my experience is that no one's trying to mess this up, and conflict and stress in relationships is normal and expectable. It's not necessarily evidence that somebody's doing it wrong.

Everything good that happens in a parent-child relationship is grounded in the parent and child

having a working relationship. And to have a working relationship, the parties have to try to understand each other. I feel I can be most useful when I'm giving parents a better way to understand their teenager and, often, when I'm with teenagers, I'm trying to help them get a better understanding of their parents. That feels like the soil in which the rest can grow. But when everyone's taking sides and pointing fingers, it doesn't seem the posture from which we want to be parenting.

Q: One thing that surprised me is how often you mention meeting with parents rather than just their daughters. When should a parent consider bringing themselves to an expert in adolescent psychology?

A: I think under two conditions — either when things are really great and the teenager does not need help but the parent could use some

support in understanding the teenager. Again, even when things are going well, the more that parents understand their adolescents, the better things go.

Or, sometimes when things are really bad and the teenager refuses help. So when I've had parents in my practice, and I'm meeting with them alone — not with their teenager present — either it's because the teenager really does not need help and is doing great but the parent could use and deserves some support or because things have come to a place where the teenager will not even talk to a psychologist. Then my job is to help the parents do what they can from their end to improve their relationship with their teenager and maybe ultimately help the teenager feel like they could make use of some therapeutic support.

It's better if you can get everybody in the room together, but you can't always make that happen and we don't throw up our hands at that point.

Q: It's been a couple of decades since you and I were teenagers. What do you think is the best thing about being a teen girl today, and the worst, compared with back then?

A: Honestly, the technology makes it better, and the technology makes it worse. That's the dramatic shift. Developmentally, they're doing the same things we were doing in terms of what they need to manage and accomplish as adolescents.

So on the one hand, the technology makes it possible for them to be connected to each other and have so much fun together. That's a really fun part about the technology. The other thing that's really fun for them is the on-demand entertainment. Teenagers watch ungodly amounts of Netflix. I see how much they enjoy the

... the technology makes it better, and the technology makes it worse. That's the dramatic shift. Developmentally, they're doing the same things we were doing in terms of what they need to manage and accomplish as adolescents.



A surprisingly sensible take on raising teen girls

BY SHARON HOLBROOK
Special to the Washington Post

Finally, there's some good news for puzzled parents of adolescent girls, and psychologist Lisa Damour is the bearer of that happy news. Damour's new book, "Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions Into Adulthood," is the most down-to-earth, readable parenting book I've come across in a long time.

Damour takes the confusing, infuriating and sometimes even frightening behavior of teenage girls and breaks it down into what's normal (almost all of it) and what to worry about (not as much as you think). "Untangled" puts sassy back talk, the ups and downs of friendships, baffling emotional upheaval, and much more into the clear context of

seven necessary transitions that teens must undergo on the way to adulthood. In other words, it's probably a good thing that your daughter's personality and interests seem to have changed dramatically, and Damour explains exactly why.

Damour builds on and references solid research in psychology, but the heart of "Untangled" is the real-life examples and anecdotes from Damour's decades of experience in counseling adolescent girls and their parents. Without preachiness or jargon, Damour illustrates how to talk to our girls, how to set limits, and how to respect and foster our daughters' growing independence.

I recently had the chance to speak with Damour and chat about her book and her work with teenage girls.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: From reading "Untangled," I get the sense that you really enjoy adolescent girls. How did you develop a specialty in the psychology and counseling of teenage girls?

A: I do really enjoy them. Part of why I like teenagers so much is I actually really loved being a teenager. In my own life, that was a really transformative time — I got a lot more freedom, a lot more autonomy. I had a great group of friends.

I also feel like I have vivid memories of being a teenager; I think I might recall more about adolescence than other grown-ups do, so when I get to be with teenagers, I welcome the chance to enjoy their perspective on things. What works well for teenagers is when adults continue to act like adults — which is what [teenagers] want — but really want to learn about the

teenager's perspective on things.

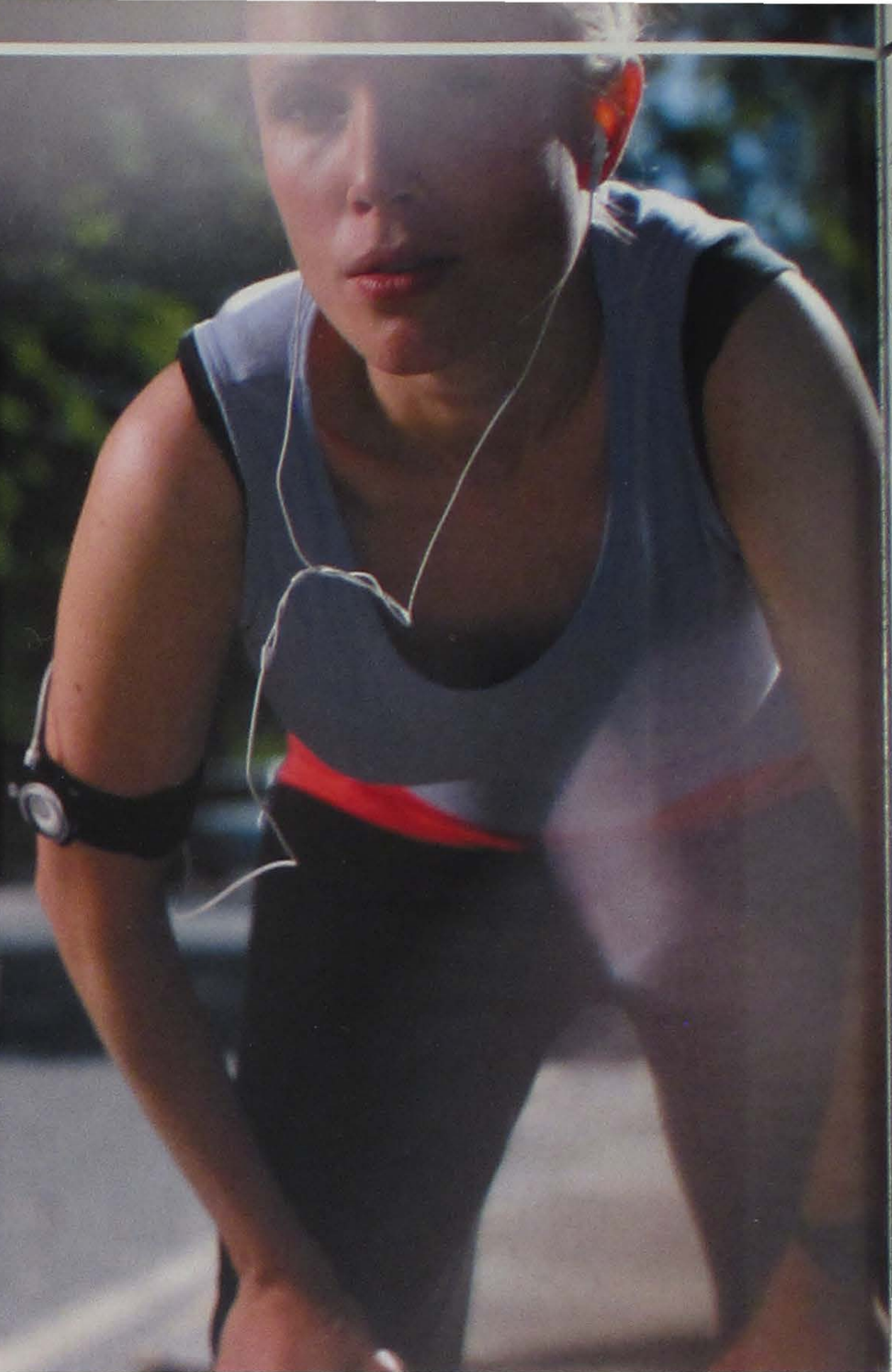
My experience is that teenagers can very quickly detect when an adult's curiosity is genuine and well-meaning, and they're eager to share about their experiences when they can sense that there's an adult who really wants to know. It's really fun. You can fool kids and grown-ups, but I don't think there's a moment developmentally that's as clear-eyed as adolescence.

Q: How did you develop this big idea of the seven transitions into adulthood? Did this framework emerge over your years of study and clinical practice, or did it come together more recently as you wrote "Untangled"?

A: Yes to all of the above. It's not a new way of thinking in psychology. One of

HOW TO TURN A FITNESS GOAL INTO A LIFETIME OF GOOD HEALTH

BY MIKE PLUNKETT | Washington Post



While you're working on your fitness resolutions, let's clear up a few misconceptions:

- Your weight will fluctuate, even after hitting that feel-good goal. It happens to everyone, even elite athletes.

- At some point, you will hit a plateau.

- Your running pace will regress after initial gains.

- You will get stuck on a weight-lifting benchmark.

None of this means your work is done and you should quit. In fact, it means the work is just beginning.

Many people who accomplish

short-term goals get a rush of achievement in the moment but don't create the behavioral changes needed to maintain and improve, said Tom Raedeke, a professor of kinesiology at East Carolina University who specializes in exercise psychology. "Somehow, we have to help people go beyond . . . just meeting the New Year's resolutions or just accomplishing this goal," Raedeke said.

Instead he wants people to envision a journey to good health - complete with numerous peaks and valleys. That means being mentally and emotionally prepared and having behaviors in

place to deal with the myriad changes and challenges that come even after the finish line. It's not about goals or measurements but rather establishing the right mind-set to change your life for the better.

The main difference between an average adult and a high-level athlete isn't a lack of talent or willpower but rather a lack of a system.

Sam Zizzi, professor of exercise and sports psychology at West Virginia University, points out that athletes succeed because of the infrastructure created for them: coaches and trainers, set practice times, and a methodical

approach to nutrition.

All that's left for them is to, well, just do it.

The vast majority of adults, however, do not have that in place.

"We're competing with a wide variety of priorities, and things kind of get lost in the mix," Zizzi said.

Individuals have to either make their fitness goals a top priority and pivot their life to accommodate that goal, or merge a goal with something or someone that already is a top priority.

"There's not this coherent goal where everyone is on board with you walking 10,000 steps a day,"

Zizzi said. "You have to put the structure in place. You have to hold yourself accountable."

Creating that structure takes accountability and support, something Evan Hakalir is building for himself. Hakalir, a 35-year-old New Yorker, lost 70 pounds in his early 20s and was physically active. During the Great Recession, he lost his real estate equity job and decided to start a new children's clothing line, Andy & Evan, with his partner.

In the midst of traveling and working 20-hour days, Hakalir gained back about 40 pounds. The seesaw of losing and regaining weight continued until a year ago, when his daughter was about to be born.

"With a baby on the way, I felt, 'Oh my God, this has gotten out of control,' "

Hakalir said. "So instead of buying the larger suit size, I decided to recommit myself to being fit."

To keep himself accountable, Hakalir joined Weight Watchers. Wanting to use the in-person weigh-ins (and the embarrassment of a bad weigh-in) as initial motivation, he's instead found a supportive environment.

"What I actually found were nice, like-minded people of all shapes and sizes who were on this journey. Some were much thinner than I ever was, and some were heavier. They all were on this lifelong struggle of staying healthy and fit," Hakalir said.

Zizzi said making a plan is key. He encourages his clients

to have a Plan A and a Plan B so they are prepared when life intervenes.

Raedeke recommends that individuals focus on planning an activity with details a reporter wants to know: the who, what, when, where and how. Instead of saying, "I want to walk more," make a plan: "I will walk one mile every Monday and Wednesday at 1 p.m. with my co-worker."

An action plan shifts the "Why?" from the outcome to the process.

• • •

Just as in other areas of life, competency is a key marker when it comes to long-term health. "People are very good at their jobs and feel good and

competent as a parent, but they don't feel competent as a healthy person," Zizzi said. "We invest and take time to do things we are good at."

With his clients, Raedeke starts by finding out whether they have been successful in making a change in the past. "If you have, what things helped? Then, I know right away I can build on what's worked for them in the

past. It can be something unrelated to diet, but what worked for them may work for diet and exercise," Raedeke said.

To keep the momentum going, you have to be dedicated to educating yourself (perhaps taking a healthful-cooking class or hiring a personal trainer) and

to experimenting.

Alice Williams, a Salt Lake City-based communications professional, said she feels confident in her ability to live healthfully in large part because of her self-education on what fitness activities and nutrition work best for her. She documents what she's learned on her blog, honestlyfitness.com.

"Even when I first started out in my journey, I've had confidence to try things. I started out with workout videos, and now I have more of an idea about what I can do," Williams said. "And I had a personal trainer a few years ago, and it was extremely helpful to get me comfortable with the gym."

When the weight fluctuates or the running pace slows, people often get discouraged and give up or overcompensate in training, which can lead to burnout and injury. Self-sabotage is the pathway to undercutting confidence. Raedeke said individuals start viewing the regression "as a failure and also a reflection of their underlying ability versus it's just a process."

Understanding the science and psychology behind fitness regression and plateaus — even understanding that plateauing is a natural component of getting stronger and faster — can save a person a lot of frustration.

Experimentation not only combats boredom but also allows short-term goals to grow into long-term behavior. Williams said her goals evolved from losing weight to being healthier to becoming stronger, an activity Williams said is particularly hard for women.

Women are "fine doing a group fitness class but shy away from lifting weights, and I've heard so many say, 'I want to get into weights, but I don't know how. I'm too embarrassed.' That's frustrating for

me," Williams said.

• • •

In 2012, Mike Stollenwerk, a Philadelphia-based chef, made the decision to get healthy.

On a friend's advice, he took up the martial arts discipline of muay thai. "The first month was hard because you don't see results right away," Stollenwerk said. "I couldn't do a push-up, I couldn't do a pull-up, I couldn't jump rope. I was really out of shape. After the first two to three months, I started seeing results. I lost 10 pounds. It was getting exciting."

In a year, Stollenwerk lost 160 pounds and was going to muay thai five days a week. But life intervened: He was in the process of opening a new restaurant in Philadelphia, which consumed the majority of his time and disrupted his eating schedule of six small meals a day.

Stollenwerk had to cut back on his hobby because it didn't fit his schedule. As a supplement, he took up hot yoga because it "keeps the chi correct and keeps you feeling good." It also fit his schedule; he goes to hot yoga at 6 a.m., then goes to work. Now that the restaurant, 26 North, is up and running, he's looking forward to working more muay thai back into his weekly routine.

A sense of enjoyment is key to staying motivated for the long haul, Raedeke said. "If they can grit through it for a week or two, that's not a lifestyle change."

Ultimately, the goal of living healthfully is to find meaning and to embrace, rather than fight, all the peaks and valleys.

"In the process, there's going to be natural fluctuations, and it's part of the journey," Raedeke said. "And the delicate nature is how to help people find meaning in the process of change, not just the outcome."

Even when I first started out in my journey, I've had confidence to try things. I started out with workout videos, and now I have more of an idea about what I can do.

Learn the rules of money so your money doesn't rule you

As we age many things become more important to us; our health, our family and way too often.....money. Statistics tell us that many women will spend 20 or more years living alone; In fact, according to the Administration on Aging, 37 percent of women in the U.S. over 65 live by themselves. And what I see, unfortunately, is the longer we live/the older we become the more we become concerned about money. My grandmother died at 98 with significant money. Still, she worried that she would outlive her money. You can probably think of women you know that have the same concerns; we don't want to be those women.

Money can be managed much like the other important parts of our lives.

We try to eat a balanced diet, exercise our mind and body, and have good social connections so we age with physical, emotional and mental health intact.

We value our family and friends and make time to have strong connections that keep us involved and interested in life.

Money is no different than family and health: we have the ability to create financial security for ourselves.

Here are four actions you can take to feel confident about your financial health.

- Spend less than you earn. Of course you need to know how much you actually get to choose how to spend. After all fixed expenses are considered what is the amount you actually spend? Use some portion of that money to:



KAREN
PETERSEN

- Save for a cash reserve

- Invest for your future

Make a purposeful choice with your personal spending money; what is important to you? What brings a smile to your face? There has been much said about the Latte syndrome.

If you buy a five dollar latte every day of the year you will spend \$1825 annually.

If you save that "latte" money for three years you will have \$5475 for a fabulous trip or whatever your hearts desires.

- Decide what is most important to you. Maybe you are a good saver and the money will be available in three years. Maybe the latte makes your morning start with energy and you prefer current gratification over long term rewards.

- Know the difference between saving and investing. In item number one I said save for a cash reserve and invest for your future. Money you need in the short term, three years or less, should be savings. Money that you will need for your future, five years and beyond, could be invested.

- Money to save is in the bank

or credit union earning interest; unfortunately not much right now. The important difference is that cash reserve money does not lose value.

If you save \$1,000 you always have \$1,000 and you hope to get interest.

Investing means your money is in stocks, bonds or some other investment that can fluctuate in value.

Your \$1000 could be worth \$1150 or more at some time in the future.

Your \$1,000 could also be worth \$850 or less in the future.

Know that you are capable of making decisions about your money. If making financial decisions is daunting for you contact a Certified Financial Planner that will help you gain confidence.

It is easy to say, "I just don't understand money". Remember the statistic about women living alone. The important thing to understand about money is that sooner or later you may need to play the leading role in your financial life. Now is the best time to plan to be able to care for yourself and your future. ...Because life is more than money.

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Getting Started: How to not stay young and penniless

BY CAROLYN BIGDA
Tribune New Service

When I was in my early 20s, I was living in a mouse-infested apartment and counting every penny.

If you're young and in a similar situation, let me tell you from experience: There's hope! Your diet, one day, will include more than ramen noodle packs and you won't have to snuggle up with a mouse at night.

But a better financial future takes effort and good advice.

Be realistic about student loans: Many students need to borrow money in order to pay for college. But Mark Kantrowitz, a student loan expert, said it's imperative to keep that debt "in sync" with your potential income.

"Education debt may be good debt because it is an investment in your future, but too much of a good thing can hurt you," he said.

His suggestion: Keep your total student loan debt to less than your projected annual salary after graduation. (You can find a number of salary estimator tools online.) Do so, and you will be able to repay your student loans in 10 years or less, Kantrowitz said.

If you borrow more, you'll likely need an alternative repayment plan after college in order to afford your monthly student-loan bill.

"These plans reduce the monthly payment by stretching out the loan term, and that means you might still be repaying your student loans when your children enroll in college," he said.

Think about your career early: You don't have to decide on a career as a freshman, but it's a good idea to start exploring the possibilities early, said Philip Gardner, director of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University.

"Professional and academic development are now tightly intertwined," he said. "So the transition into the workplace begins on day one in college."

If you put off job-search steps — such as doing internships, attending career fairs and networking — getting work after graduation will be much more difficult.

Respect the dollar: You don't have to be a miser like Ebenezer Scrooge, but you will work hard for the money you earn. Keeping tabs on how you spend those dollars will help you make the most of them, said Bonnie Sewell, a financial planner in Leesburg, Va.

"Every dollar counts and is counted," she said.

Be disciplined: Saving — it is one of the most important things you can do when you're young. By starting early and doing it regularly, you will form a habit that serves you for a lifetime.

You will also take advantage of compound interest. And to make the most of it, "You want to minimize expenses and emotions and maximize diversification and discipline," said Allan Roth, a financial planner in Colorado Springs, Colo.

He explained: "Expenses take from returns and our emotions make us buy high and sell low. Diversification helps us own everything rather than buying what's 'hot,' and discipline makes us rebalance to buy stocks when the market is down and sell when it's up."

Don't fear risk: Speaking of up-and-down markets, William Bernstein, an investment adviser and author of several investing books, including, "If You Can: How Millennials Can Get Rich Slowly," said young investors should not dread market losses.

"Twenty-somethings should get down on their knees and pray for a long brutal bear market. They should ardently embrace risk so that they can acquire stocks cheaply," he said. Because when those stocks rise, you'll be far richer than if you had bought at higher prices.

Young people have plenty of working years and time in front of them. "For the youngster, stocks are not all that risky," he said.

Be disciplined: Saving — it is one of the most important things you can do when you're young. By starting early and doing it regularly, you will form a habit that serves you for a lifetime.

Blending lives — and design styles

WASHINGTON POST

Interior designer Barry Dixon joined Post staff writer Jura Koncius last week on our Home Front online chat. Here is an edited excerpt:

Q: Can you suggest a masculine paint color for a home office?

A: Warm grays, greens and browns come to mind, possibly in more medium tones to keep the room from becoming too dark. Stonewall, Wild Buck and Sage Frost, all from C2 Paint, are clean, masculine and tonal and quiet a space for concentration.

Q: My husband and I recently moved in together and are in the process of blending our styles. I tend toward a more traditional and Southern look, while he is more minimalist and modern. Any suggestions on how to achieve a cohesive balance, rather than looking mismatched and thrown together?

A: I'd suggest using your warm, traditional pieces in a more modern way to blend the two styles. Maybe you invest in a comfy, clean-lined sofa and pair it with more traditional footed lounge chairs or wing chairs. Or it's always interesting to cover a traditional sofa or chair in a more modern fabric. An easy fix might be to incorporate contemporary lighting — lamps and ceiling fixtures — with your traditional furniture.

And remember to pare down the quantity of furnishings in your transitional space to keep it a bit more minimal.

Q: What is your favorite paint color for a bedroom?

A: When in doubt, serenity rules when considering colors and tones for any bedroom. I love pale sky, water or garden colors, as they always seem relaxing. Favorite colors at the moment include Snow Sky and Michael's Moon from C2 Paint. Think a day at the spa.

Q: What type of bed would you recommend for a couple who moves around a lot within the United States and overseas? The problem is each place we live in has different proportions.

A: A modern problem, and very common. You can't go wrong with a natural linen upholstered headboard. I love the vertical channel quilted versions myself and see these often in mail-order catalogues from Pottery Barn, Restoration Hardware, Wisteria, etc. They'll work anywhere and may be repurposed to a guest room once you settle down and upgrade.

Q: Do you think sisal fabric is still a good bet for a busy room, like a living room? I know they are hard to clean and don't feel great on bare feet. Do you have an alternative?

A: Actually, I seldom use sisal for just the reasons you have mentioned — it's too scratchy and too hard to clean. I much prefer braided seagrass for its look, longevity, comfort and practicality. I can't think of any carpet that's a more congenial backdrop for myriad styles, patterns or colors. I also love the wool hybrids, like wool and jute, wool and seagrass, and wool and hemp.

Q: What's hot in paint colors now? My wife is insisting that gray is going out and beige is heading back in, but before we start looking at paint samples, I'd like your input.

A: I presume we are speaking of the interiors, and I must confess I'm still on the gray bandwagon. To stay on trend while keeping an eye to the future, I'd stick with warmer gray and stone tones, not their cooler, more industrial cousins. There can be a bit of beige in a warm, gray alternative.

Q: What is a good ceiling light for the bedroom that's attractive but not too showy? We have a tall, four-poster bed, so we can't have a chandelier or anything too large.

A: I can think of no better solution than a bell jar or cloche style lantern or pendant. Always beautiful in a room with a four-poster bed, this solution allows interest and historic context without taking up the space of an armed chandelier.

Q: I would love to update my kitchen, but on a budget. My condo has black granite countertops and tan oak cabinets. I cannot afford new granite or cabinets right now but would like to lighten things up. Any suggestions?

A: I'd paint those tan oak cabinets, for sure. Maybe a light- to medium-toned gray, with darker gray interiors in any cupboards with glass doors. Or go all out, if it's your style, with glossy red paint on the cupboards for drama.

Q: We're going to put our house on the market in early 2017, but we're doing some repairs and minor upgrades now. How important is a pendant light and a light above the dining room table to buyers? I want to replace it with something cheap, but I can't find anything that goes for under \$250.

A: I do think that lighting in a home is important to a buyer, especially in a foyer or dining room, since it's a focal point. There are very well-priced lights that should fit in your budget from multiple mail order and online vendors. Rejuvenation is a favorite of mine since they are so affordable, and their clean retro and vintage pieces seem to fit in any all-American home. Eliminate decorative fixtures in living rooms, family rooms and bedrooms to save dollars, and instead focus on the foyer, dining room and kitchen areas.



Gardeners grow older, but gardening doesn't

BY JAN RIGGENBACH
Contributing Writer

Less work to maintain our gardens. Isn't that what all gardeners want?

But just because we're busy or have aches and pains, we don't want to give up on the beauty.

For the last decade I've been looking for easier ways to keep up with my garden. For example: Replacing some of the small plants with easy-care flowering shrubs like hydrangeas and viburnums for more impact with less work. Reducing mowing by replacing some of the lawn with evergreen groundcovers. Installing crescent-shaped edgers to maintain a neat-looking division between lawn and garden. Allowing perennials to grow close enough together to shade out the weeds. Replacing full-size fruit trees with dwarfs.

That's why I enjoyed reading Sydney Eddison's "Gardening for a Lifetime: How to Garden Wiser as You Grow Older" (Timber Press, 2010, \$19.95). It reads almost like a diary as the author makes her own decisions about how to cope.

I laughed out loud when I read the first sentence: "It took a great deal of time and energy to make the garden as hard to manage as it ultimately became, and I loved every minute of it."

She continues: "It has been wonderful, and given the opportunity I would do the same all over again."

I could say the same thing about my own garden, and I know a lot of other gardeners who could, too.

Besides telling the story of her garden, Eddison shares the stories of some of her



gardening friends. While the author herself is determined to make any hard choices necessary to avoid giving up her garden as she ages, some of her friends have made the hard choice to start over with a smaller, more manageable space. In the end, of course, everyone has to find his or her own answers, but I was intrigued by these diverse stories.

I also appreciate the positive spin Eddison puts on change: "...time marches on. Shrubs and even trees outgrow their positions, and circumstances change. Adjustments must be made, which in a way is what makes gardening so endlessly fascinating."

After years of packing my landscape with increasing numbers of trees and shrubs, I've experienced the unexpected enjoyment of a new view Eddison writes about when a large plant must go.

I also know firsthand about mistakes made as young gardeners, which oblige us to cope with the consequences later on.

If you're not a patient reader, you'll love the "Gleanings" at the end of each chapter: They allow you to get Eddison's main points in a jiffy.

Easy-care shrubs like this hydrangea deliver more flower power with less work. Photo by Jan Riqgenbach

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Branch out from the usual with a wattle fence

BY BARBARA DAMROSCH
Special to the Washington Post

Back when everything came from the land, fences were made from what you found.

Rocky areas are still crisscrossed by stone walls that kept early settlers' livestock in and critters out.

To build fences in timber country, logs were split into fence rails. There were other solutions, too, some almost lost to memory. Tree stumps could be dug up with roots intact and turned on their sides, the roots interlocking to form a barrier. Tree saplings or branches could be woven together, a practice known as wattle work. Once used in masonry as wattle and daub, where panels of woven branches were daubed with mud or dung, wattle work is still useful to a gardener setting out to build a fence.

The basic structure of a wattle fence is a line of posts stuck in the ground and thinner, more flexible lengths — known as withies — woven in and out to form a wooden fabric of sorts. Just as you would on a loom, you direct the withies so that where one goes in front of a post the next one goes behind, and so on down the line. The next line reverses that. Withies long enough to wind in and out of at least three posts without a new withie being started will make the fence sturdy. Pushing them down as you go makes a tight weave. If you end one withie at its base end, you start the next one with its tip.

Posts are best cut from rot-resistant

wood such as black locust or cedar, pointed at the base with a hatchet. But it's fine to buy posts and sink them the way you would for any fence. The creative part is finding the withies. You might thin a crowded understory with young bendable saplings of alder, hazel, maple, birch — anything. The classic wood is willow because of its flexibility. If your posts are willow, too, you can even create a living fence — an informal hedge — because willows tend to sprout roots when stuck into the ground. Such a fence requires pruning as it grows, but it's green and permanent.

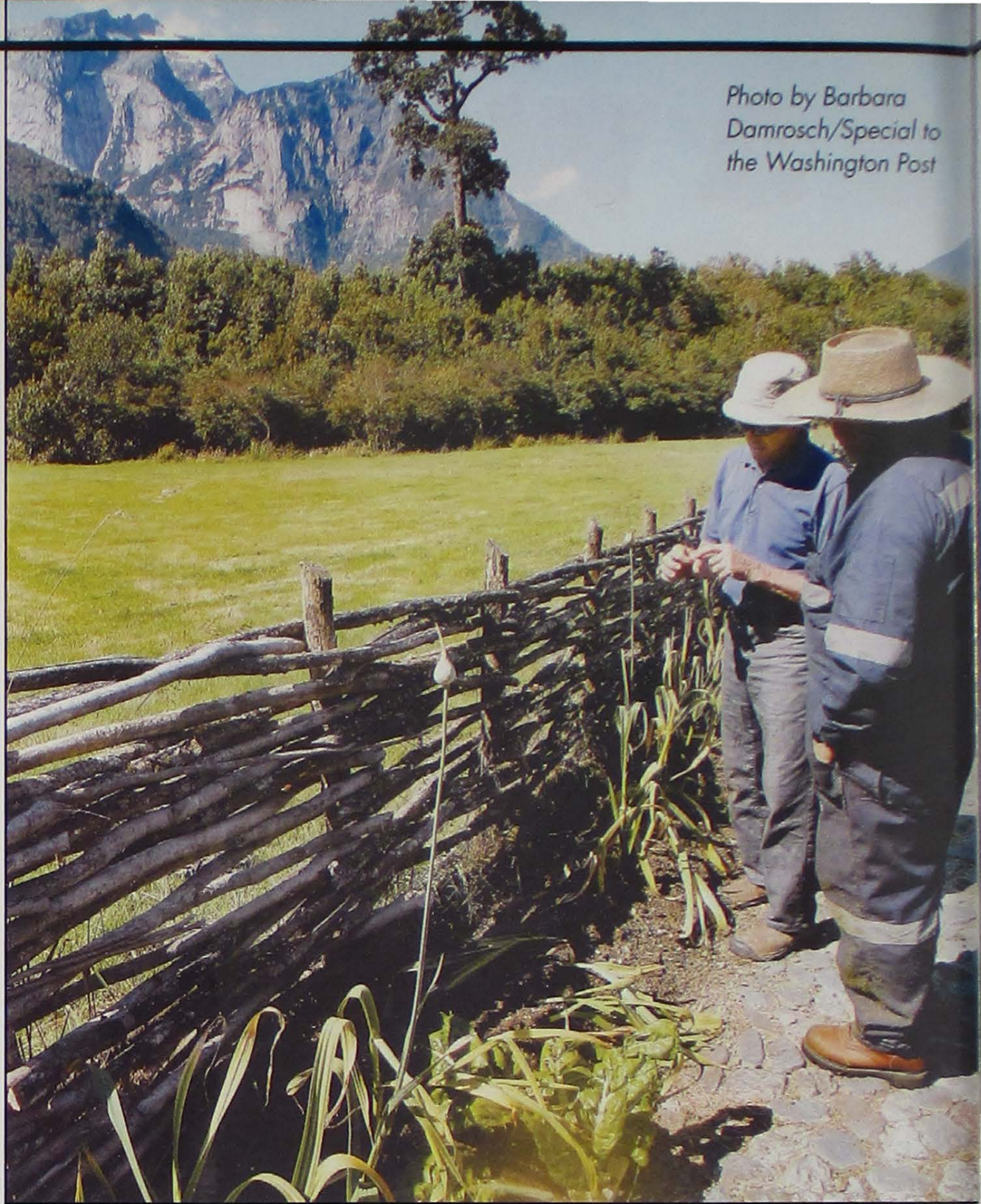
You can produce your own supply of withies by planting willows and coppicing them (also known as pollarding). When branches are about two years old, cut them back to the main trunk, yielding a supply of withies. The pruning will spur

new sprouts to grow. Use suckers from lilacs, suckers from tree stumps, thinnings from forsythia and the "watersprouts" that shoot upward from the branches of apple trees.

Though popular in the British Isles, wattle fences are hard to find in the United States. I saw wonderful ones at farms and gardens in Chile, on conservation land made public by the late environmentalist Doug Tompkins. In all of the parks and land preserves he created, his aesthetic could be seen everywhere in his brilliant use of natural materials.

The diameter of your materials will depend on the size of the fence, its use and the look you want to achieve. You can use a simple, low wattle fence in a garden to keep out your pets or young children. I have a great itch to build one this spring. I'll do it for Doug.

Photo by Barbara Damrosch/Special to the Washington Post



Balancing Act: Does 'stepchild' imply second-class status in the family?

BY HEIDI STEVENS
Tribune News Service

"For children, 'stepmom' captures, 'I have a mother and a step-mother. It makes it very clear who is and who is not my mom, and that is important to them. It allows them to stay loyal to their mom, even as they make room in their heart, over time, for their stepmom.'"

Ron Deal

Author of 'The Smart Stepfamily: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family'

The most common response I get from readers when I occasionally mention my stepson is a frustrated finger wag: Stop using the term "stepson."

"You're making him feel like a second-class citizen when you call him your 'stepson,'" wrote one woman. "You should call him your son, just like you do your biological son."

But what about his biological mother, who is a huge and important part of his life? Wouldn't calling him my son unfairly push her aside?

I ran this question by Ron Deal, director of FamilyLife Blended and author of "The Smart Stepfamily: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family" (Bethany House Publishers). He reached out to me after a recent column I wrote about blending families.

Deal was quoted in the Wall Street Journal piece that served as a springboard for my column, and he wanted to chat about some of the common complexities of blending.

One of the most complex steps, he said, is deciding what to call each other.

"The terminology people use to refer to their family members is important because it gives definition to that relationship," Deal, a licensed marriage and family therapist, said. "Often the terminology is indicative of the level of bondedness and openness that people have toward one another."

Which is why many adults, he said, prefer the term "blended

family" to "stepfamily."

"People want a term that communicates love and affection," he said. "Who wants to be called a stepmother, especially given the connotation of the wicked stepmother in our culture? 'Step' sounds like someone you would never let into your heart."

But that's a grown-up thing, Deal says. Kids want words that honor every layer of their family.

"For children, 'stepmom' captures, 'I have a mother and a step-mother,'" Deal said. "It makes it very clear who is and who is not my mom, and that is important to them. It allows them to stay loyal to their mom, even as they make room in their heart, over time, for their stepmom."

But what about how adults refer to kids? Do kids hear "step" as "second-class?"

Probably not, Deal said. Kids, after all, are pretty rigid sticklers for accuracy, especially coming from the grown-ups in their life.

But when in doubt, ask them.

"I highly recommend sitting down and having a conversation to say, 'Hey, what are we going to call each other?'" Deal said. "'What feels comfortable to you?' As long as there's some respect in the terms and they're mutually agreeable, wonderful. Follow the lead of the child."

And know that the terms may change over time.

"As the crockpot cooks you — stepfamilies cook very slowly, but you get there — your terms will change as your relationship bonds and grows," he said. "The important thing is to give everyone a place to start and move forward from."

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STAYING YOUNG BY LIVING AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

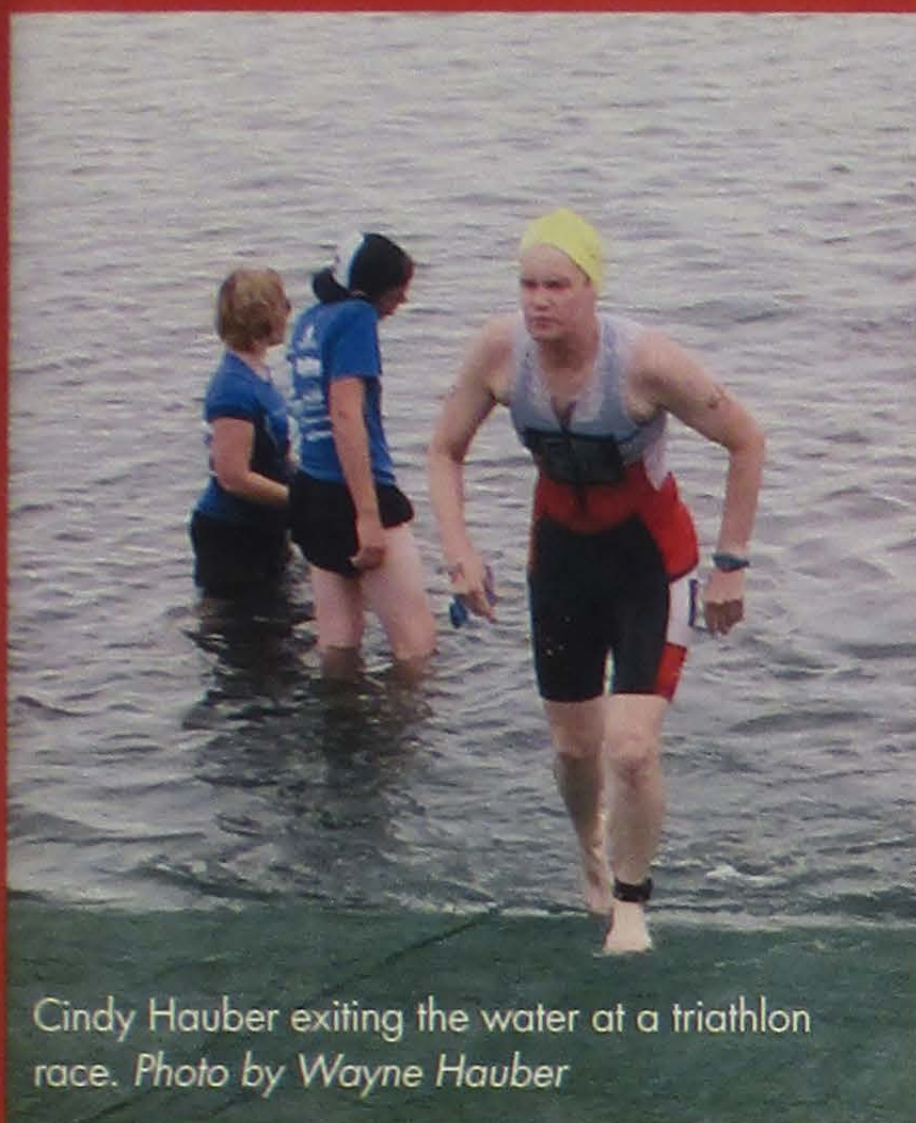
BY KECIA PLACE-FENCL
Contributing Writer

Cindy Hauber is the definition of young at heart! Staying active is her passion; she not only helps others rehab to stay active, but she also models her passion with the active lifestyle she leads. Her life motto is: "You are as young as you feel." Cindy incorporates endurance, strength, balance and mobility into her regimen to keep active, healthy, fit and stay young.

After working as a home health care physical therapist for Mary Greeley for 10 years, she has semi-retired at the young age of 62. She now works part-time as a PRN physical therapist for two rehab companies in Ames and Story City. One of the many lessons Cindy learned in working with the home-bound is that teaching others how to do things independently is much more helpful than actually doing it for them. She enjoyed helping them increase their self sufficiency and their self confidence so they could



Cindy Hauber takes first place in her age group at the Accel Triathlon in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Photo by Kecia Place-Fencel



Cindy Hauber exiting the water at a triathlon race. Photo by Wayne Hauber

continue to live at home and socialize with friends.

Whenever we stretch ourselves as we strive to get better, we not only learn things about ourselves we might not have known, but we come to appreciate what others do not have. Cindy is learning to work on patience, to be more aware of her limitations and find joy in all the great things going on in her life. All this learning and growing helps keep her refreshed and feeling younger. Especially since she has not reached her full potential yet!

A typical week of activity for Cindy includes daily stretching, core and balance training, and mental exercise. She tries to get in 1-2 hours of aerobic exercise most days, with 2-3 days of strength training and 1-2 sessions of yoga depending on her schedule. Her aerobic activities change with the season, but swimming and cycling are definitely her favorite year round exercises. She enjoys training indoors on her bike trainer in a group setting, where there are set workouts to challenge her and the other participants as well. Other seasonal activities include kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding in the summer months or cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter months.

She has always placed a high priority on fitting exercise into her busy schedule. Lucky for her, she is an early morning person! After a morning workout, Cindy feels more energized and ready to start her day with her body and brain charged and ready to go. Cindy has found exercise to be great for her physical strength, endurance, and mobility, which allows her to do all of her daily living activities with better efficiency and less effort. It also gives her the fitness to compete in athletic events. She has met many friends of all ages over the years through competitions and enjoys staying active with friends and family. The majority of her family vacations have included the great outdoors, where she enjoys hiking, cycling, kayaking

or whatever outdoor adventure strikes their fancy!

Cindy also focuses on her mental health by exercising her mind. As she has aged, she has come to realize that multitasking is more of a challenge than it used to be and her memory is not as sharp as it once was. Through mental exercises, Cindy has found she is able to sharpen her mental acuity and improve her mental health.

In struggle, we gain strength. Cindy has had to overcome some obstacles along the way, which has helped mold her into the strong, positive and inspirational woman she is today. A few years ago, Cindy had a stroke, which left her struggling to stay organized and multi-task. It also left her struggling to remember and learn new things. She is currently working on returning from her most recent setback, which occurred this past fall when she was in a bicycle crash, that resulted in the repair of her right clavicle. She has had to endure several weeks of immobility of her right shoulder and she is now slowly working on increasing her mobility while trying to maintain her endurance and strength. Cindy is looking forward to returning to swimming and triathlon at full speed so she can enjoy racing again.

From my own perspective as a fellow triathlete, it is so much fun to watch Cindy at triathlon races. She lines up at the front of the swim pack and occasionally gets a strange look or two from the younger athletes that surround her. Watching Cindy exit the water in the lead is so much fun! She is an inspiration and the definition of young at heart!

Cindy believes the term "aging" changes throughout our lifetime. Now that she has hit "middle age," it represents a time period where it might take more effort to make gains in her strength or mental acuity, but it can be done. Cindy is a fighter who will keep chasing down the competition to earn her spot on the podium both in life and sport!



What it means to be HEART HEALTHY

So you're ready to make some heart-healthy changes in your life, especially with your diet and exercise? Perhaps you're wondering: Will it really make a difference? Do you really need to make those changes if you're taking medicine for your heart?

The answer is yes. Your lifestyle does matter — a lot.

Results from three groundbreaking studies examining the impact of lifestyle modifications underscore the power of healthy habits and the importance of focusing on total health to reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, according to the American Heart Association.

The studies were recognized among the top research advances in 2015.

Here are some things the studies found:

1. It's not enough to just cut saturated fats.

How patients replace calories when cutting saturated fats makes a big difference when it comes to lowering coronary heart disease risk, according to a study published in October in the

Journal of the American College of Cardiology. It is a significant finding, researchers said, because most people eat more low-quality carbohydrates when cutting saturated fats.

According to the study, replacing 5 percent of calories from saturated fats with an equivalent amount of polyunsaturated fats or monounsaturated fats lowered heart disease risk by 25 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Replacing with whole grains lowered risk by 9 percent. Substituting refined starches or sugars didn't increase or decrease risk.

2. Bigger increases in exercise reduce heart failure.

Guidelines recommend at least 30 minutes most days of the week. But to reduce the risk of heart failure, people should double or quadruple that, according to a study published in October in the AHA's journal *Circulation*.

In the study, those who exercised two and four times more than the minimum recommended amount lowered their risk of developing heart failure by 19 percent and 35 percent, respectively.

"This shows that the minimum recommended is good, but much more physical activity is better to really have a potential impact to prevent heart failure," said Marie-France Hivert, M.D., an assistant professor in the department of population medicine at Harvard Medical School and chair of AHA's physical activity committee.

3. Encouragement, support of a healthy lifestyle is so important.

The study, published in September in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, used a low-cost automated program to send four text messages a week that offered advice and support to make lifestyle changes.

After six months, levels of bad LDL cholesterol, systolic blood pressure and body mass index were lower among patients receiving the text messages. Text-message recipients also exercised more and were more likely to have quit smoking.

In general, the American Heart Association recommends these strategies to help protect your heart:

■ Eat a wide variety of nutritious

foods in the right amounts from all the food groups.

— Include lots of different kinds of vegetables and fruits, especially deeply colored varieties.

— Include plenty of fiber-rich, whole-grain foods.

— Choose fat-free, 1% and low-fat dairy products.

— Eat fish, preferably fish containing omega-3 fatty acids (for example, salmon, trout and tuna) at least twice a week.

— Select lean meats and skinless poultry.

— Include legumes, nuts and seeds.

■ Limit high-calorie, low nutrient foods.

— Reduce the amount of saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol you eat.

— Limit sugar-sweetened beverages and fruit drinks, and save high-calorie snacks and desserts for occasional treats.

— Keep sodium to a minimum by limiting prepackaged foods and choosing unprocessed foods and products that are the lowest sodium available and using little or no salt when preparing foods.

— If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation.

Try this great recipe to ease your way into eating heart-healthy and starting your new lifestyle today.

Mediterranean Tuna Antipasto Salad

Serves 4.

All you need:

1 (15 to 19 ounces) can beans, such as chickpeas, black-eyed peas or kidney beans, rinsed

2 (5 to 6 ounces each) cans water-packed chunk light tuna, drained and flaked

1 large red bell pepper, finely diced

1/2 cup finely chopped red onion

1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley, divided

4 teaspoons capers, rinsed

1 1/2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary

1/2 cup lemon juice, divided

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

Freshly ground pepper, to taste

1/4 teaspoons salt

8 cups mixed salad greens

All you do:

Combine beans, tuna, bell pepper, onion, parsley, capers, rosemary, 1/4 cup lemon juice and 2 tablespoons oil in a medium bowl. Season with pepper.

Combine the remaining 1/4 cup lemon juice, 2 tablespoons oil and salt in a large bowl. Add salad greens; toss to coat. Divide the greens among 4 plates. Top each with the tuna salad.

Nutrition Facts per serving: 290 calories, 16g fat, 2g saturated fat, 12mg cholesterol, 505mg sodium, 28g carbohydrates, 9g fiber, 17g protein.

Source: Adapted from Eating Well magazine.

The information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice. Nicole Arnold represents Hy-Vee as a nutrition expert working throughout the community to promote healthy eating and nutrition. Nicole is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian, ACE certified personal trainer and member of the Academy of Nutrition

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HERE'S TO THE SIMPLE SALADS OF WINTER

Photo by Goran Kosanovic/Washington Post

BY JOE YONAN
Washington Post

Behold the winter salad. What makes it so special? It features heartier ingredients than those delicate salads of summer, for one thing. And with some exceptions, it's not typically all raw. But the most important quality of the salads of winter might be the same as the salads of any other time of year: They feature seasonal produce.

This goes without saying - doesn't it? - but I'm not about to slice some imported-from-Mexico tomatoes or California strawberries for a February dinner. No, winter is when I want salads of roasted root vegetables or winter squashes, sauteed hearty greens, cabbages, apples and the like. Sometimes with grains, naturally.

The simplest combinations are often the best. That's what attracted me to a refreshingly short recipe in the roasting-pumpkin chapter of Tom Hunt's book, "The Natural Cook." Like so many other cookbook authors out of England (Nigel Slater, Hugh

Fearnley-Whittingstall, Yotam Ottolenghi, Diana Henry), Hunt seems to intuitively get the vegetable-focused-cooking thing.

His salad's appeal extends beyond its taste, even though that in itself is enough of a selling point. It features a delightful combination of colors: deep orange from the squash, forest green from the kale, flashes of garnet from the pomegranate seeds. With a drizzle of ivory-colored (and pungent) tahini-lemon-garlic dressing, it's just plain gorgeous.

Squash with chickpeas, kale, pomegranate and tahini dressing

2 or 3 servings

MAKE AHEAD: The salad can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 4 days, preferably without the dressing and the pomegranate seeds. The dressing and the roasted squash can be refrigerated (separately) for up to 1 week.

Adapted from "The Natural Cook," by Tom Hunt (Quadrille, 2014).

Ingredients

For the salad
1 medium butternut or other

winter squash of your choice, scrubbed well (1 1/2 pounds total)

1 teaspoon plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt, or more as needed

6 ounces kale or other winter greens, stalks thinly sliced and leaves coarsely chopped

1 clove garlic, chopped

1/3 cup pomegranate seeds (arils; from 1/2 small pomegranate)

3/4 cup home-cooked or no-salt-added canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed

For the dressing

1 tablespoon tahini

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Pinch fine sea salt, or more as needed

2 tablespoons water

Steps

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Cut the squash in half lengthwise. Scrape out the seeds and strings, reserving the seeds for another use, if desired. Cut the flesh into large wedges about 1 inch thick. (Discard the peel, if desired.) Place on a rimmed baking sheet, drizzle with 1 teaspoon of the oil and sprinkle with

1/4 teaspoon of the salt. Bake until fork-tender, 30 to 40 minutes.

Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a large skillet fitted with a lid over medium heat. Add the kale stalks and cook, stirring frequently, until they soften, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the kale leaves and garlic, cover, and cook for another 2 minutes, until the kale wilts a bit. Stir in the remaining 1/4 teaspoon of the salt, taste and add more salt as needed. Remove from the heat.

To make the dressing, stir together the tahini, garlic, lemon juice and salt in a small bowl. Add the water 1 tablespoon at a time, whisking until the dressing is the consistency of heavy cream. Taste, and add more salt as needed.

Cut the baked squash into bite-size pieces. Add to the pan of kale along with the chickpeas, tossing to incorporate.

Divide the salad among individual plates, scatter with pomegranate seeds, drizzle with the dressing and serve.

Nutrition | Per serving (based on 3): 270 calories, 9 g protein, 42 g carbohydrates, 11 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 480 mg sodium, 10 g dietary fiber, 10 g sugar

Try Fennel Sausage Pasta for a hearty but easy meal

BY LINDA GASSENHEIMER
Tribune News Service

Sausage, fennel, onion and tomatoes make a robust pasta topping.

Turkey sausage flavored with fennel can be found in many markets. Look for mild or sweet Italian sausage.

Fennel is a sometimes called sweet anise. It's a large white bulb with celery-like stems and green, feathery leaves. It has a mild anise or licorice flavor and can be eaten raw or cooked.

Fennel and sausage pasta

1/2 pound lean turkey sausage
3 teaspoons olive oil, divided use

1 medium fennel bulb, coarsely
chopped (about 2 cups)

1 cup coarsely chopped onion

1 cup cauliflower florets broken
into small pieces

1/4 pound spaghetti

1 cup canned, no-salt-added,
crushed tomatoes

Salt and freshly ground black
pepper

2 tablespoons chopped parsley
(optional)

Place a large saucepan with
3 to 4 quarts water on to boil
for spaghetti. Cut sausage into
1/2-inch slices. Heat 1 teaspoon
olive oil in a nonstick skillet over
medium-high heat. Add sausage
and saute 2 minutes. Remove
sausage from skillet to a plate
and add the chopped fennel,

onion and cauliflower. Saute 5
minutes. As the vegetables start
to color, return the sausage to the
skillet for 2 minutes. Remove to a
plate and add the tomatoes for 1
minute to warm through.

As soon as the water comes to
a rolling boil, add the spaghetti
and cook 8 to 9 minutes. Drain
and add to the skillet with the
tomatoes. Add the remaining 2
teaspoons olive oil, sausage and
vegetables. Toss well. Add salt and
pepper to taste. Sprinkle parsley
on top. Makes 2 servings.

Per serving: 541 calories (29
percent from fat), 17.4 g fat (3.5
g saturated, 8.1 g monounsatu-
rated), 84 mg cholesterol, 32.8 g
protein, 64.6 g carbohydrates, 8.2
g fiber, 753 mg sodium.



Photo by Linda
Gassenheimer/
Tribune News
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Fastest dark chocolate peppermint sauce. Photo by Dixie D. Vereen/
Washington Post

Meet sorghum syrup and peppermint oil, my winter BFFs

BY CATHY BARROW
Special to the Washington Post

Once the weather turns seriously cold, and seasonal DIY pickings are slim, I keep my curiosity fueled by exploring ingredients new to me. In past years, such focused cooking has led to a February of piment d'Espelette, a March of single-source honeys and an entire winter devoted to California olive oils.

This year, it's sorghum, a thick, sweet syrup sold across the South, and peppermint oil, an alternative to peppermint

extract. Although they couldn't be more different, these two intriguing flavors are made for do-it-yourself sweets.

I've been getting to know sorghum, and I'm not the only one. Sorghum seems to be having a moment in the sun, but it's not new by any stretch of the imagination. The sorghum plant grows across Africa and was carried to the United States on slave ships and planted across the southern part of our country. It is particularly productive, offering grain for a fine flour and a sweet syrup made from its stalks.

North Carolinians have been pouring

sorghum syrup over biscuits forever. Once I had sorghum in the pantry, I made plenty of biscuits, but I also learned to add a glug to a marinade for grilled chicken. And when I swapped sorghum for molasses in a cookie recipe, I understood why it's called a gingersnap. Sorghum makes for a snappy cookie. Molasses wishes it had sorghum's complexity: that dusky tang, rich sweetness and smooth finish.

It wasn't until I met sorghum that I discovered my perfect caramel. I've made caramels with chilies and chocolate, with honey and with brown sugar; in this

caramel, particularly when paired with brown butter, sorghum practically sings "Hallelujah!" This is a caramel worthy of your valentine.

As with sorghum, it has taken me time to get to know peppermint oil. A friend recommended that I try baking with peppermint oil instead of peppermint extract, emphatically stating that the flavor was clean and better and would change my mind about minty chocolate baked goods.

Peppermint oil is pressed from peppermint leaves, and it's sold at baking supply stores, at natural-foods stores and via online purveyors. The more familiar peppermint extract is made by infusing mint leaves in alcohol and is widely available. The flavor of the oil is clear, bright and fresh, suffusing the food with a minty oomph. The flavor of peppermint extract dulls with cooking as the alcohol burns off. Food made with extract doesn't hold a candle to the same food made with oil.

I tested the two by making brownies, white chocolate bark and ice cream sauce. I am sold; I will forevermore use peppermint oil instead of extract. Because peppermint oil is metered out in drops, a small bottle of it will last a very long time. Be wary, however; it is strong. Too many drops, and the mint flavor can overwhelm everything (and stay with you for hours, like bad takeout). Start small — a drop or two — then add more only after tasting once the first drops have been fully incorporated.

In just a few minutes, melted chocolate and cream with no more than five drops of peppermint oil transforms into a shiny, rich, dark chocolate sauce ready for spooning over

ice cream, drizzling on pound cake and enrobing marshmallows. Pour it into the prettiest jar for gift giving.

I'm sure these wintertime experiments will find their way into my summer jams. A dab of peppermint will sharpen the naturally tart flavor of strawberry. And I can't stop thinking about sorghum ice cream over a bubbling peach crisp. I bet it will be a match made in heaven.

Fastest dark chocolate peppermint sauce

Makes 1 cup

It's an easy-to-make gift, a quick way to turn ice cream into an event, and a drizzle for toasted pound cake. This bitter-sweet ganache is dressed up in sexy clothing and accented with the perfect accessory, peppermint oil. It pours in ribbons when warm. Decadent, yes. Delicious, yes. Doable, yes. In a snap.

The sauce is flavored with essential oil, which has an intense, pure flavor, rather than peppermint extract, which may taste medicinal to some. It is available at Whole Foods Markets, MOM's Organic Markets, La Cuisine in Alexandria and Yes! Organic Markets and from various online purveyors.

MAKE AHEAD: The sauce can be refrigerated for up to 1 month, preferably in a glass jar.

From Cathy Barrow.

Ingredients

3/4 cup (6 ounces) heavy cream
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped

No more than 5 drops peppermint essential oil (see headnote)

Steps

Combine the heavy cream and butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat and cook until quick bubbles form

at the edges. Remove from the heat; whisk in the chocolate until fully incorporated.

Cool the mixture for 5 minutes, then add the peppermint oil drop by drop, tasting after 2 drops and adding 1 more drop at a time, tasting each time, until you're satisfied with the strength of the peppermint. Whisk the sauce and use immediately. Or for longer storage or gift giving, pour into a glass jar, cool, cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

To serve, bring the jar of sauce to room temperature, then warm the (tightly covered) glass jar in a small saucepan of barely bubbling water until the sauce is loose and pourable.

Nutrition | Per 2-tablespoon serving: 170 calories, 1 g protein, 10 g carbohydrates, 15 g fat, 9 g

saturated fat, 40 mg cholesterol, 10 mg sodium, 1 g dietary fiber, 7 g sugar

Brown butter sorghum caramels

48 servings pieces

Sorghum syrup adds a rich molasses flavor to nutty, tender caramels.

You'll need a candy thermometer and wax paper or waxed candy wrappers.

Sorghum syrup is available at Whole Foods Markets and MOM's Organic Markets.

If you like a little salt with your caramel, see the VARIATION, below.

And here's a helpful cleanup tip: Fill the cooked-caramel pot with water, and place in it

CARAMEL, see page 28

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CARAMEL continued from page 27

anything that came in contact with the sticky stuff. Bring to a boil over high heat; the caramel — even the burnt bits — will dissolve into the water.

MAKE AHEAD: The wrapped caramels can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for about 2 weeks.

From Cathy Barrow, the author of *"Mrs. Wheelbarrow's Practical Pantry: Recipes and Techniques for Year-Round Preserving"* (W.W. Norton, 2014).

Ingredients

8 tablespoons (4 ounces; 1 stick) unsalted butter, plus more for the pan

1 1/2 cups (12 ounces) sugar

3/4 cup (6 ounces) sorghum syrup or sorghum molasses (see headnote)

1 cup (8 ounces) heavy cream

Steps

Use a little butter to grease an 8-inch square Pyrex or metal baking pan, then line the pan with parchment, cutting the paper at the corners to make neat edges. Grease the parchment with butter, as well.

Melt the 8 tablespoons of butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Once the foaming recedes and browned bits have gathered at the bottom of the pan, cook just until the butter takes on a slightly toasted scent and is slightly darker in color; that whole process should take about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Combine the sugar, sorghum and 1/2 cup of the heavy cream in a heavy-bottomed 4-quart pot over medium heat; cook, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Clip on the candy thermometer.

Slowly, over about 25 minutes, increase the heat to high and boil the mixture,

stirring occasionally, watching as the sugary syrup bubbles and rises up. Once the mixture reaches 220 degrees, remove the pot from the heat and add the cooled brown butter, pouring it through a fine-mesh strainer to avoid introducing any solids.

Stir in the remaining 1/2 cup of heavy cream, then return the pot to high heat; boil, stirring constantly, and bring the mixture to 248 degrees, to form a caramel that's foamy with large, lazy bubbles that rise to the surface and slowly burst.

Pour the caramel into the prepared pan, but do not scrape the bottom of the pot, as burned caramel pieces could introduce a bitter taste to the finished candies. Gently knock the pan on the counter to remove any air bubbles; let cool thoroughly before cutting.

Lift the parchment paper from the pan, bringing the caramel out in one block; place it on a cutting board (still on the paper). Use a ruler as a guide and a long, sharp, dry knife to make clean cuts. Slice the block into four equal, horizontal slabs, then cut each of those into 12 equal pieces, to make a total of forty-eight 2-inch pieces. Wrap each one in a 4 1/2-by-5 1/2-inch piece of wax paper or confectionary wrapper before serving or storing.

VARIATION: Ten minutes after pouring the caramel into the pan, once the candy has begun to set up, sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of Maldon flaked sea salt across the surface.

Nutrition | Per piece: 70 calories, 0 g protein, 10 g carbohydrates, 4 g fat, 3 g saturated fat, 10 mg cholesterol, 0 mg sodium, 0 g dietary fiber, 10 g sugar

Brown butter sorghum caramels. Photo by Dixie D. Vereen/
Washington Post




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■ AMES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Celebrate Spring in Ames

Now that February has come to a close, our thoughts turn towards the new month and the promise of spring. It's time for spring break and our minds naturally begin to wander, thinking of fun adventures and well-deserved rest and relaxation.

While many residents and Iowa State University students choose to schedule a trip away from Ames during March, there are many that decide to stay home. If you happen to stick around, you'll be surprised with the variety of new and exciting possibilities to explore. Feel free to celebrate and enjoy spring break all month long!

Trade in the Winter Grays for Gorgeous Color

In 2016, Reiman Gardens will celebrate color for its theme. As the weather begins to warm, plan to take a stroll in the Gardens or view an ever-changing kaleidoscope of colors at the Christina Reiman Butterfly Wing. You'll find up to 800 butterflies in this tropical sanctuary. In addition, the Hughes Conservatory will boast the garden display, "Orangery," through April 17. Orangeries were used in 17th century Europe to overwinter orange and other citrus-bearing trees. Colorful fruits and the elaborate greenhouses built to grow them are the inspiration for this display. You'll see an orangery replica greenhouse featuring citrus, orchids, and the color orange. For additional information regarding Reiman Gardens, visit www.reimangardens.com or call 515.294.2710.

Explore Nature

With spring around the corner, most of us look forward to getting outside and experiencing nature. Sometimes we plan a trip just to take in the beauty of the outdoors. Save on gas and stay in Story and Boone County, where there are a multitude of opportunities in March to discover nature.

Story County Conservation has several fun events at McFarland Park planned which provide unique ways to explore nature. For instance, you can attend the Mushroom Cultivation Workshop on March 5. There you'll learn how to grow your own mushrooms. On March 16, there's a session focusing on Iowa's reptiles. They'll discuss the fears and myths surrounding these scaly creatures. Live animals will be part of this family friendly program.

Curious about how to use a GPS? Then you'll want to take part in the Geocache Egg Hunt scheduled for March 26 at McFarland Park. Learn about geocaching at this great holiday event. To find out more about these three educational programs, visit www.storycountyconservation.org or call 515.232.2516.

Of course, sometimes the best way to enjoy nature is to go outside and simply be. Ames offers more than 35 parks and 55 miles of trails to discover. Ledges State Park in Madrid and the High Trestle Trail which passes through Story, Boone, Polk and Dallas counties are just a short drive away and offer many scenic vistas.



Hughes Conservatory, photo courtesy of Reiman Gardens

Hit the Slopes

Sure, taking a ski trip over spring break sounds like fun. But why travel, when you can hit the slopes at Seven Oaks Recreation in Boone? Plan to ski or snowboard through mid-March! Ski and snowboard rentals are available and Seven Oaks even offers free beginner mini lessons to skiers and snowboarders ages seven and above. What a terrific way to check out a new sport! Visit www.sevenoaksrec.com or call 515.432.9457 to learn more.

And don't forget the Ames/ISU Ice Arena. Plan to grab some skates and visit the rink. Call 515.292.6835 or visit www.cityofames.org and select the Parks & Recreation department to learn more about this facility. While open skate times are available, skate lessons or recreational hockey leagues are also an option. You can take advantage of our city's great amenities and expand your horizons all at the same time.

Cheer on the Cyclones

Iowa State University Women's Basketball and Softball will both host games this month, so don't miss the opportunity to cheer on our Cyclone teams. Experience Hilton Magic at Hilton Coliseum or enjoy warmer temperatures at the Cyclone Sports Complex. To get the latest scoop regarding Cyclone Athletics, check out www.cyclones.com.



Bullets Over Broadway, photo courtesy of Iowa State Center

Enjoy the Performing Arts

Our community is fortunate to have the Iowa State Center in our backyard. Their performing arts series enables us to enjoy quality entertainment and never leave the city limits. This March is no exception. Stephens Auditorium will feature the Polish Baltic Philharmonic Orchestra on March 1, the Broadway musical, *Bullets Over Broadway*, on March 3, and a youth matinee, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar and Other Eric Carle Favorites*, on March 8. Call 515.294.2479 or visit www.center.iastate.edu to learn more about the exciting performances coming to the Iowa State Center.

Even Students Choose to Spend their spring break in Ames

While most think students leave Ames for spring break festivities, this year over 950 students will travel to Ames to participate

in the 2016 Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) Student Symposium. Every year one veterinary school hosts an educational symposium for veterinary students from across the country. The three day program consists of labs, lectures, academic and athletic competitions, an exhibit hall and the SAVMA House of Delegates bi-annual meeting. Iowa State University is pleased to be selected as the location of this year's symposium.

Citrus trees, reptiles, Broadway shows AND playing in the snow? A spring break like no other can be found right here in Ames!

Hope you plan several exciting spring break adventures in Ames and the surrounding area! This list provides just a taste of all that can be explored. Visit the Ames Convention & Visitors Bureau's website at www.cityofames.com to view a detailed event calendar as well as get additional ideas of all there is to **DO** in Ames, plus where to **EAT** and **SHOP**.



Cyclone Fans, photo courtesy of Iowa State University Athletics Department



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MEDITERRANEAN TUNA ANTIPASTO SALAD

Serves 4

ALL YOU NEED:

1 (15 to 19 oz) can beans, such as chickpeas, black-eyed peas or kidney beans, rinsed
2 (5 to 6 oz each) cans water-packed chunk light tuna, drained and flaked
1 large red bell pepper, finely diced
1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley, divided
4 tsp capers, rinsed
1 1/2 tsp finely chopped fresh rosemary
1/2 cup lemon juice, divided
4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, divided
Freshly ground pepper, to taste
1/4 tsp salt
8 cups mixed salad greens

ALL YOU DO:

1. Combine beans, tuna, bell pepper, onion, parsley, capers, rosemary, 1/4 cup lemon juice and 2 tablespoons oil in a medium bowl. Season with pepper.
2. Combine the remaining 1/4 cup lemon juice, 2 tablespoons oil and salt in a large bowl. Add salad greens; toss to coat. Divide the greens among 4 plates. Top each with the tuna salad.

Nutrition Facts per serving: 290 calories, 16g fat, 2g saturated fat, 12mg cholesterol, 505mg sodium, 28g carbohydrates, 9g fiber, 17g protein. | Source: Adapted from Eating Well magazine.

This information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice.